

2001 Results of the ACT Assessment

Bunny Mack
Education Associate
Office of Research

David Burnett
Director
Office of Research

Sandra Lindsay
Deputy Superintendent
Division of Curriculum Services and Assessment

Inez M. Tenenbaum
State Superintendent of Education

Colleges and universities use tests such as the ACT or the SAT, along with other information, to make admissions decisions. This report reviews the results of the ACT Assessment for South Carolina and for the nation for 2001.

The ACT includes four tests: English, mathematics, reading, and science reasoning. Each requires between 35 and 60 minutes for a total testing time of 2 hours, 55 minutes. Results are reported for all four tests and for a composite score. The score scale for each ACT subject area, as well as the composite score, is from 1 to 36.

The average composite score of the 1,069,772 students in the nation who graduated in 2001 and had taken the ACT during their sophomore, junior, or senior years was 21.0. In South Carolina, the average composite score of the 10,797 students who graduated in 2001 and had taken the ACT during their sophomore, junior, or senior years was 19.3. In South Carolina 1,746 more scores were reported for ACT test-takers than in the previous year (10,797 in 2001 and 9,051 in 2000).

Scores in South Carolina remain below the scores that, according to ACT, Inc.'s "National Summary Report" for 2001, indicate adequate preparation for college-level work. For example, according to that report, the typical English cut-off score indicating preparation for a college-level literature course is 21, while the average South Carolina English score was 18.8. The typical science score indicating preparation for college-level biology is 23 and for chemistry, 25, while the average South Carolina science score was 19.2. The typical math score indicating preparation for college-level algebra is 23, while the average South Carolina math score was 19.3. Students who earn scores below the cut-off scores listed above "may need additional academic preparation to be successful in these typical college entry-level courses," according to the national report. ACT, Inc.'s president, Richard Ferguson, has stated that, depending on the subject area, scores of 16 to 19 indicate "only minimal readiness" for college.

The table below gives average scores for South Carolina (SC) and the nation by subject area and by composite. South Carolina's average composite score for 2001 remained the same as it was for 2000, 19.3.

**ACT Average Scores for Subject Area and Composite
South Carolina and the Nation
2001**

Reference Group	Number of Students	English	Math	Reading	Science Reasoning	Composite
SC	10,797	18.8	19.3	19.5	19.2	19.3
Nation	1,069,772	20.5	20.7	21.3	21.0	21.0

Five-year trend data, beginning with 1996–97, for South Carolina and the nation are presented below:

**ACT Average Scores for Subject Area and Composite
South Carolina and the Nation
1996–97 to 2000–01**

SOUTH CAROLINA:

Year	Number	English	Math	Reading	Science	Composite
1996–97	4,994	18.1	18.9	19.1	19.0	18.9
1997–98	5,385	18.4	18.8	19.4	19.0	19.0
1998–99	6,766	18.6	19.0	19.3	19.2	19.1
1999–00	9,051	18.7	19.2	19.5	19.2	19.3
2000–01	10,797	18.8	19.3	19.5	19.2	19.3

NATION:

Year	Number	English	Math	Reading	Science	Composite
1996–97	959,301	20.3	20.6	21.3	21.1	21.0
1997–98	995,039	20.4	20.8	21.4	21.1	21.0
1998–99	1,019,053	20.5	20.7	21.4	21.0	21.0
1999–00	1,065,138	20.5	20.7	21.4	21.0	21.0
2000–01	1,069,772	20.5	20.7	21.3	21.0	21.0

The table below presents 2001 ACT data by gender. In South Carolina, for composite scores, females scored higher than males, while the reverse was true for the nation. In both South Carolina and the nation, female students scored higher on English and reading, and male students scored higher on math and science reasoning.

**ACT Average Scores for Subject Area and Composite by Gender
South Carolina and the Nation
2001**

SOUTH CAROLINA:

Gender	Number	English	Math	Reading	Science	Composite
Males	3,690*	18.0	19.7	18.9	19.7	19.2
Females	6,771*	19.3	19.0	19.8	19.0	19.4

*These totals will not add up to the number of students who took the ACT in South Carolina because not all of those students reported a gender.

NATION:

Gender	Number	English	Math	Reading	Science	Composite
Males	459,547	20.0	21.4	21.1	21.6	21.1
Females	604,808	20.8	20.2	21.5	20.6	20.9

The table below presents 2001 ACT data by ethnicity/race. For all tests and the composite, the average scores for white students were higher than those for African-American students.

**ACT Average Scores for Subject Area and Composite by Ethnicity/Race
South Carolina and the Nation
2001**

SOUTH CAROLINA:

Ethnicity	Number	English	Math	Reading	Science	Composite
African American	3,639*	15.5	16.9	16.3	16.8	16.5
White	6,220*	20.7	20.6	21.3	20.7	20.9

*These totals will not add up to the number of students who took the ACT in South Carolina because not all of those students reported a race/ethnicity.

NATION:

Ethnicity	Number	English	Math	Reading	Science	Composite
African American	112,924	16.2	16.8	16.9	17.2	16.9
White	763,377	21.3	21.3	22.2	21.8	21.8

The table below presents the relationship between average ACT scores and annual family income levels for the total group of students taking the ACT, those who completed a core program of college preparatory high school courses, and those who did not complete such a core program. A detailed definition of a core program is on the next page.

**ACT Average Composite Scores by Annual Family Income for
Total Group and for Core/Less Than Core Program Completers
South Carolina and the Nation
2001**

SOUTH CAROLINA:

	<\$18,000		\$18,000–\$50,000		\$50,000 or More	
Reference Group	Number	Composite	Number	Composite	Number	Composite
Total Group	1,100	16.5	3,973	18.5	3,523	21.0
Core	744	17.1	2,988	19.0	2,809	21.3
Less than Core	348	15.2	944	17.0	639	20.0

NATION:

	<\$18,000		\$18,000–\$50,000		\$50,000 or More	
Reference Group	Number	Composite	Number	Composite	Number	Composite
Total Group	80,584	18.1	372,011	20.2	434,655	22.3
Core	43,139	18.9	223,551	21.0	292,761	23.0
Less than Core	36,028	17.1	143,316	18.8	135,450	20.8

According to ACT, Inc., "The academic preparation a student receives in high school correlates with success in college. ACT research indicates that students who prepare academically by taking a core high school program consistently score higher on the ACT assessment than those who do not. These same students also earn better grades in college. These facts underscore the value of a strong basic program of study in high school."*

ACT reports average scores for students taking the "core or more" and taking "less than core." ACT defines this coursework as follows:

Core or More

A core or more program is defined as a typical college preparatory program including

- **English:** four years or more with one year of credit each for English 9, English 10, English 11, English 12;
- **Mathematics:** three years or more with one year of credit each for Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry and one-half year of credit each for Trigonometry, Calculus (not Pre-Calculus), other math courses beyond Algebra II, and Computer Math/Computer Science;
- **Social Studies:** three years or more with one year of credit each for American History, World History, and American Government and one-half year of credit each for Economics, Geography, Psychology, and other history (European, state, etc.); and
- **Natural Sciences:** three years or more with one year of credit each for General/Physical/Earth Science, Biology, Chemistry, and Physics.

Less than Core

A less-than-core program refers to any high school program consisting of fewer courses than those included in "core or more."

*"ACT Assessment 2001 Results, Summary Report, South Carolina," published by ACT, Inc.

The average ACT scores in English, mathematics, reading, science reasoning, and the composite for 2001 seniors who completed a core curriculum and for those who did not are shown for South Carolina (SC) and the nation and for South Carolina by ethnicity in the following two tables. Students who completed core coursework had higher average scores than students who did not, and white students had higher average scores than African-American students. (Scores are not reported for "Other" ethnic groups because ACT, Inc. does not report scores for groups in which there are fewer than 500 test-takers.) "E" is English, "M" is Mathematics, "R" is Reading, "SR" is Science Reasoning, and "C" is Composite.

**ACT Average Scores for Subject Area and Composite, Core/Less than Core
South Carolina and the Nation
2001**

Reference Group	Core or More					Less than Core				
	E	M	R	SR	C	E	M	R	SR	C
SC	19.4	19.7	19.9	19.6	19.8	16.9	17.7	17.8	17.9	17.7
Nation	21.5	21.7	22.2	21.8	21.9	18.8	19.0	19.8	19.8	19.5

**ACT Average Scores for Subject Area and Composite
Core/Less than Core by Ethnicity
South Carolina
2001**

SC	Core or More					Less than Core				
	E	M	R	SR	C	E	M	R	SR	C
African American	16.3	17.4	16.9	17.2	17.1	14.0	15.8	15.1	15.8	15.3
White	21.1	20.9	21.5	20.9	21.2	19.6	19.4	20.1	19.8	19.9

The next three pages include a graph presenting national and South Carolina ACT scores for 2001, as well as the average composite scores for all states and the District of Columbia.

(For questions about this report, please contact Bunny Mack, Office of Research, State Department of Education, 803-734-8573.)

The graph below presents a 2001 ACT score comparison for the nation and for South Carolina by subject area and composite:

